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The Making of Santa Claus Part I

Lead: One of the most beloved legendary figures of the western world is Santa Claus. His legend originated in 4th century southwest Asia Minor, which is present day Turkey.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The tradition of Santa Claus has its genesis in various customs of different cultures throughout the world. However, the great influence came from a real person - a young monk named Nicholas who served as a priest and

later as a bishop in the town of Myra, on the Mediterranean seacoast.

Two hundred years after his death, he was recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church – Saint Nicholas. Historians actually know few details about his life, but it seems that he was much admired for his kindness, piety, and charity. These characteristics became legendary and the legends began to grow and spread – St. Nicholas tossing bags of gold through windows to needy children, St. Nicholas intervening to save children and sailors from death, St. Nicholas saving three sisters from being sold into slavery or perhaps prostitution by their father by providing a dowry for each so the sisters could find

suitable husbands. As the legends spread and grew, Nicholas eventually became the protector many of groups of people in need and even the performer of miracles.

December 6th, the anniversary of St. Nicholas's death, became his feast day, and many Europeans marked the date by giving presents or treats to children. After the Protestant Reformation, Catholic traditions, including the veneration of St. Nicholas, did not survive in many parts of Europe, particularly with Puritans and Protestant reformers in England. The legend of St. Nicholas, though, blended with Christmas celebrations and local customs in Germany, Ireland, Scandinavia, and

particularly in Holland where the feast day continued to be celebrated. In 1624 Saint Nicholas came to America with the Dutch colony founded on the mouth of the Hudson River in what is present day New York. Next Time: St. Nicholas grows tall and gains weight.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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***St. Nicholas Center.* 10 September 2009 <
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